

## Christmas by jlondonk

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**Summary:**

Jonathan bought a tree to surprise his family for Christmas but needs some help decorating.

Thankfully, Nancy read his mind.

## Christmas

It had taken weeks of extra shifts at the garage to save up for it and now that he was standing in front of the thing in his living room, Jonathan wasn't sure he'd bought the right one. It had looked good when he'd loaded it into the car but now, unpacked and all set up, it was sort of...boring. Too Big. Humongous actually.

His mother had wanted to get a proper tree for Christmas for as long as he could remember but those things were expensive. They'd never really minded, especially when they could spend the money on presents for Will instead. But after all they'd been through, Jonathan simply wanted his mother to have the best possible Christmas celebration.

So he'd gone out and bought the nicest tree he could find, while Joyce and Will were off grocery shopping and getting some new winter clothes for his little brother. They wouldn't be back for a couple of hours, which was good, cause Jonathan still needed to decorate that thing.

With what, though, he had no idea. He didn't want to use any Christmas lights (for obvious reasons) and they didn't really have that much in the house.

Just as he was staring at the long branches, the phone rang.

"Hello?"

"Hi Jonathan, it's Nancy."

He knew it was her, of course. He'd recognise her voice anywhere.

“Nancy.”

A small cough escaped him. His throat often felt a little dry while talking to her. Funny, that.

“Did you get it?”

He’d told her about it his plan some time ago, remembering how her face had lit up and she’d looked at him with her big eyes all excited.

‘Jonathan’, she’d said. ‘That’s a fantastic idea’

Nancy loved surprises.

“Yeah. Yeah, it’s here.”

“Great, I’m coming over!”

“Sure,...wait, what?!”

But she’d already hung up. He stared at the phone in confusion. What was happening? She was coming over? Why?

Granted, they had been hanging out a lot more lately, especially since she and Steve had broken up. It had happened gradually, their friendship developing beyond the restraint of school life, and strangely, it felt like the most natural thing in the world. Fighting monsters together probably helped.

He looked around the living room and his palms grew a little sweaty. Nancys house was big. Really big. The Wheelers Christmas tree was

huge and bright and perfectly decorated, down to the last bauble. How was he ever going to pull this off?

He heard her car a good 20 minutes later and was just about to unwrap the paper mache star Will had made 2 years ago, when there was a knock distracting him. The knock sounded strange though, as if someone was only brushing their foot against the door. He rushed over to open it and was greeted by boxes upon boxes staring at him, two small hands wrapped firmly around them and somewhere behind the whole ordeal, he could hear Nancy saying: "Little help here".

He stumbled forward, trying to relieve her of everything at once and nearly dropping half the stuff onto the floor. Suddenly her face appeared in front of him, smiling brightly, her cheeks tainted red from the cold.

"Hi.", she said, her breath forming clouds in the air in front of him.

She was very close.

Dumbfounded, he sort of stared at her for longer then he probably ought to and tried for a weak smile.

Carrying everything over to the kitchen table and placing the boxes on top, he turned to find Nancy inspecting the tree. He couldn't read her expression, fidgeting with his shirtsleeves.

"I though it looked alright when I saw it outside but now,...the light sort of makes it look...weird,...too big I think, I don't know."

"No.", she said. "Jonathan, it's perfect."

He stared at the floor, trying to hide a smile.

"They're gonna love it."

It was still something he had to get used to,...having a friend.  
Someone besides his family telling him that he did something right.  
Accepting praise did not come easily to Jonathan Byers.

“Right, let’s start then.”, Nancy said, taking off her jacket and throwing it on the couch. She wore her favourite jumper, the one he’d seen on her many times before, her gold ballerina necklace dangling over it. Her hair was pulled up in a ponytail, framing her face and her high cheekbones.

“Ehm...start what?”

She had walked over to the stuff she’d brought and was unpacking the first box, pushing aside the paper it was covered in.

“Decorating, of course. I’ve got red and gold and - oh hold on- blue as well. What’s your favorite?”

She was looking at him expectantly, holding up 3 Christmas baubles the size of his fist. Jonathan simply stared.

“I....” She raised her eyebrows at him and he swallowed.

“If this isn’t right, we can go out and look for something else. Or I can go back to my place and see if we have different colours, there’s probably more in the basement somewhere if I -“

“You brought all this...for me?”

He had found his voice again but it sounded strange to his own ears, like he hadn’t used it properly in a while.

Nancy looked at him for a few moments, slowly lowering the baubles in her hand. She shrugged, her fingers ghosting over the decorations on the table.

“It’s nothing, really.”

Jonathan couldn’t put into words how absolutely wrong she was but the moment felt too precious for his ramblings. So he was quiet, stepping up next to her instead, letting his hands linger on the boxes in front of him.

“I like the gold.”

The smile she gave him in response was almost blinding.

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It took them an hour and honestly, Jonathan didn’t know what he would have done without her help. Nancy had brought little individual candles, lighting them carefully in the appropriate spots and making the whole tree look eerily beautiful.

They had listened to his music while decorating and Jonathan saw Nancy’s feet bobbing to David Bowie and he smiled to himself.

Perhaps he could make a mixtape for her. Friends did those sort of things, right?

When it was done, they stood next to each other in silence, admiring their work.

“Almost perfect.”

“Almost?”

Nancy smiled and nodded towards Wills Christmas star, lying on the kitchen table.

“Can’t forget the most important ornament.”

She walked over and picked it up carefully, holding it like a treasure and handing it to Jonathan.

“It’s a beautiful star. Will’s very talented.”

Nancy didn’t know what it meant to Jonathan, didn’t know how her words made his heart beat quicken and his chest swell. That she was so oblivious to the power she had, would forever elude him.

He turned the star over in his hands and thought about his little brother, about his family, about the fact that he was now standing here, with Nancy Wheeler of all people, decorating a Christmas tree and that it didn’t feel odd or unnatural. She was here because she wanted to be here.

He gave the star back to her.

“You should do the honors.”

Jonathan pulled one of the chairs from the kitchen and helped her up. Nancy carefully places the star on top of the tree, adjusting it slightly until it was in a position she approved off. She stepped off the chair but didn’t let go of his offered hand immediately.

Instead, she turned it over, running her finger lightly over the closed wound from the night they’d fought the Demogorgon. A shiver ran all the way down to his toes.

“Does it still hurt?”

He shook his head. Using words didn't feel safe right now. Nancy released his hand and pressed her lips together, as if she didn't know what to say next.

“You've got some....tinsel in your hair.”

*Way to break the silence Jonathan, well done buddy.*

“Oh.”, she said, running her hands over her ponytail and eventually unfastening the knot, letting her long hair fall down.

“Where is it? Can you...”

She turned, flinging her hair over her shoulder and Jonathan, trying to appear calmer than he was, brushed his fingers through it.

Which was a mistake.

Nancy's hair was softer than he imagined. The fact that he knew this now, did not calm his nerves.

The misplaced string of glitter had already tumbled to the floor but he found himself repeating the motion, swallowing and realising with a start, that he stood much closer to her than before.

“I got it, it's - fine now.”



He took two steps back to what he perceived to be a safe distance.

“Thanks.”

It was quiet.

“Nancy.”

*Shut up, Jonathan. You'll only make a fool of yourself.*

“Hm?”

*Do not say anything embarrassing!*

“I was gonna....I mean, I was just....”

*Ok but stop mumbling as well, that's even worse.*

“You want some egg nog?”

*WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT? WANT SOME EGG NOG? WHAT ARE YOU - 40?*

He wanted to bang his head against the wall.

But Nancy, ever patient Nancy, only smiled at him. “No, thanks, I’m good.”

The sound of an approaching car broke their awkward encounter and

Jonathan turned, heart suddenly in his throat.

“Oh, they’re here earlier than I thought.”

“I can go! Let me get my jacket and I just -“

“No, no, you should stay. Please - I mean, if you want to, it would be...nice.”

She didn’t reply immediately, just looked straight at him, straight through him and his nerves, (right to the core of him it seemed) and then the door.

“Quick, get your camera!”

Without a second thought, he sprinted to his room and grabbed it from inside his wardrobe. When he returned, Nancy had moved the empty boxes under the table and turned off the lights so that the Christmas tree was now illuminating the whole room. He even heard festive music coming from the speakers. How the hell had she done that so quickly!

But Jonathan didn’t have anymore time to wonder about it as the door opened only seconds later and his mum entered with a grocery bag in her hand, followed shortly by Will. There was a second, where the two of them looked at Nancy but then their heads turned simultaneously and Jonathan pressed the shutter on the camera several times, capturing their shocked, joyful faces at just the right moment.

“Oh Jonathan!”

“Cooooo, Mum, look, it’s got all our presents underneath!”

“Honey, you shouldn’t have done that, it must have cost you a fortune...oh Jonathan.”

He put down the camera and walked over to her.

“It wasn’t that much, really, I promise.”

She wasn’t convinced but Jonathan saw her looking at the tree, which Will had already sat down next to gazing up at it in wonder, and then back to him and there was so much fondness and love in her gaze that he wanted to get her a tree like this every year. She squeezed his arm and pulled him into a hug. Behind them, the camera flashed and he heard the shutter click. All three Wheelers turned around and looked at Nancy, who was caught in the spotlight now, camera in hand and looking a little lost.

“Merry Christmas Mrs. Byers.”, she said, smiling shyly.

“Nancy, it’s so wonderful to see you!”

“Oh, I was just in the neighbourhood -“

But Jonathan didn’t even let her finish that thought.

“Can Nancy stay for dinner? She helped me set everything up!”

“Of course! Darling, thank you! You must stay for a bit!”

She pulled Nancy into a hug, whispering something in her ear that

Jonathan couldn't hear but it was decided.

"I just...gotta call my parents to let them know. May I use your phone?"

While she was away, Will was tugging on his shirtsleeve. Joyce had gone off to put away the groceries and start on dinner but she kept popping her head around the corner to look at the tree and shake her head with a soft smile. Jonathan sat down next to his brother, feeling absolutely content.

"You like the tree?"

Will nodded. "It's really great Jonathan. It's as big as Mikes!"

He doubted that but it was nice to see his brother so happy.

"Hey, you even used my star!"

"Yeah, Nancy helped me put it up there."

Will smiled.

"You like her, right?"

Jonathan completely lost his train of thought for a moment, startled by the bluntness of the question.

"I...what?"

“Mike says she’s much nicer now than she was before. I’m glad she’s your friend. It’s good.”

He seemed so genuine that Jonathan’s heart ached for reasons he couldn’t quite explain.

“Yeah.”, he said, looking towards the hallway where he could hear Nancy’s muffled voice. “Yeah, it’s good.”

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Even though Joyce tried to convince her to stay for longer, Nancy had to leave eventually.

She thanked his mum for her hospitality and said once again that really, she’d barely done anything, it was all Jonathan.

He blushed profusely at that, grabbing his jumper, saying he’d walk her out. When he closed the door behind him, Nancy pulled her jacket tighter around herself. It was cold now, even though there was no snow yet, it would start coming down soon.

“Thank you for all your help.”

“It was nothing.”

“It was....everything.”, he said, trying to push through the nerves.

“You are....so...great.”

God this was awful. He was awful and he needed to shut up

immediately or she would probably never talk to him again.

When he dared to steal a glance her way, Jonathan saw her looking up to a spot above his head. She raised her hand, pointing her finger at it.

“Mistletoe.”

*Oh Jesus.*

“Oh, I swear I had nothing to do with that. My mum, she...eh...she sometimes puts them up ... for good luck or something, I don’t...”

Nancy was looking at him. He could sense it, her gaze was almost palpable.

“Wish me luck then.”, she said and did something totally unexpected, which was to raise herself on her toes and kiss Jonathan full on the lips.

He was floating, falling, submerged and breathless at the same time.

Her hand was balanced softly on his cheek and it took all of three seconds before she retreated but it was enough time for him to feel like he might be plunged in an alternate reality because this couldn’t be real. An overwhelming heat spread from his neck up to his cheeks and he wasn’t sure he could talk if he tried. Nancy Wheeler had kissed him.

And he still hadn’t responded in any way whatsoever.

“Nancy.”

*Good, her name, that's a start.*

“Yeah.”

A sense of déjà vu overcame him. Jonathan wasn't good with words, never had been. The things he wanted to say to Nancy, he could not say because he didn't know how. Friends weren't his forte.

But she was so much more than a friend. Nancy Wheeler, the brave girl that fought monsters. The one who talked to him when no one else had bothered. The one who notices him, saw him, when no one else...

He opened his mouth and tried to tell her, but nothing seemed good enough, nothing seemed right or suitable to express -

A small hand touched his arm and he faltered. Nancy was smiling at him.

“I know.”, she said and his heart skipped a beat.

Jonathan swallowed and managed a nod, overcome by all these feelings and he watched her turn and walk to her car, watched her drive off, away from his house and thought about the kiss and her hair and the way she'd held his hand and all the want inside of him that burned brightly for this beautiful girl, with the gold necklace.

### **Author's Note:**

I wrote this as a gift for someone on tumblr but thought I'd post it here as well. Hope you guys enjoy it! Let me know what you think!